



Speech by

Mr M. HORAN

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

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BEEF INDUSTRY

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (11.51 a.m.): The electronic national livestock identification system is to be introduced into Queensland on a mandatory basis from 1 July 2005. The system has already been introduced in most of the other southern states of Australia and will be introduced in our neighbouring state of New South Wales in July this year.

There have been a number of producer meetings held around the state where serious concern has been voiced by experienced large and small cattle producers about some aspects of the scheme. At the same time, there have been a number workshops conducted by Agforce and by the Meat and Livestock Authority of Australia. They have demonstrated some of the potential benefits and reasons for the implementation of this scheme.

Importantly, throughout the world there has been a gradual move to a whole-of-life identification system. We have had a good system of branding, which identifies the property of birth, and tail tags, which identifies the last property from which the animal came when sent to saleyards or abattoirs. A whole-of-life system is now being imposed by the likes of the European Union. It has done it for some time. People have to be EU accredited to be involved in that system. It is being used by Saudi Arabia. Our competitors, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, New Zealand, the USA and Canada are looking at a whole-of-life trace back and recording systems. Likewise, our major customers, Canada, the USA, Korea and Japan may, in the future, look for whole of life trace back identification system. That may also occur on the domestic scene with some of the major buyers in Queensland.

It is important that we look very carefully at this process of identification while still maintaining our cutting edge in the marketing and processing of one of our major export income producers—the beef cattle industry. There has been a number of concerns put forward by the producers. At one of the meetings in central Queensland hundreds attended. Six of those producers combined had more cattle than all the cattle in Victoria. These concerns are being brought forward by experienced people who make a major contribution to our domestic and export industry and who create jobs all along the chain of beef production and beef processing.

We need to have state government involvement in this through the DPI. We need financial commitment and staff commitment to overcome these problems and ensure that, when the mandatory application of these NLIS tags is introduced in about 18 months time, problems will not exist. Most of the major producers said to me that they can see the reason for a trace back system, but they do not want it put in place unless they have a guarantee that the tags work and that the systems work. DPI, through the Beattie government, should be putting money, staff and resources into this project.

In other southern states a total of \$30 million has been applied by the state governments to provide software technology into the saleyards, processing plants and abattoirs. Some state governments have assisted by subsidising the cost of the tags. They are somewhere in the order of \$3.80 per electronic tag. That is an extra cost for every beast that leaves the property.

The Queensland government has so far offered absolutely nothing. We have the biggest beef industry in Australia. It is a major exporting industry. About 85 per cent of our beef is exported. This government does not give priority to this industry. They provide \$12 million for the Indy, and they provide \$84 million annually in grants to all sorts of businesses to grow or enhance their businesses. Here is a chance to protect and enhance our beef industry and this government, through the Minister

for Primary Industries and Fisheries, Mr Palaszcuk, has given absolutely nothing to this scheme. It needs decent support.

The problems that have been identified include the purchasing of cattle. Those property owners who purchase cattle privately, those that have not come from saleyards, will have to have the software system to read the tags as those cattle come onto their properties. There is so much interproperty transfer within the same company or different family companies in Queensland. There will be problems there. The reliability of tags and software is another problem. There will be problems with non-read tags in abattoirs or saleyards. Imagine in Roma where there are up to 10,000 head. If they have a certain percentage of non-reading there will be big problems there. The cost of tags, the cost of the software and the alternate pathways of those producers who breed cattle and fatten cattle on their properties and send them direct to works or to live export will have problems. It is about time this government put its weight behind the beef industry in Queensland.

Time expired.